

October 13, 2017

The Honorable Elaine Chao
Secretary of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Chao:

Maine Department of Transportation is applying for a Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER IX) grant to repair three highway bridges in rural Maine, and the Northern Timber Cruisers snowmobile club fully supports this effort.

This critical TIGER IX project will repair three highway bridges in Penobscot County and neighboring Piscataquis County; the Mattawamkeag Bridge located in Mattawamkeag, the Pleasant River Bridge located in Milo and the West Branch Bridge located in T3 Indian Purchase TWP. The addition of a sidewalk to all three bridges will allow snowmobile and ATV traffic, in addition to grooming equipment, to traverse the bridges more easily. Our organization, in addition to several others in this region, rely heavily on year-round recreational access to this region of the state. These bridges are also the gateway for activities such as snowmobiling, skiing, fishing, hiking and camping that draw visitors to our state every year. These activities and visitors are crucial in allowing our region to thrive economically, especially in an area that has experienced economic hardships recently.

While these three bridges provide recreational access, they also provide access for residents seeking every day services such as education, employment, healthcare, and shopping. In an already rural area, a bridge closure could require detours of up to 100 miles, which is unacceptable for both residents and visitors. A bridge closure would most certainly result in a further economic decline for this region.

It is essential that safe and reliable access to this region is maintained and our organization is very pleased that MaineDOT is seeking financial assistance from the US Department of Transportation to repair these deteriorating bridges. The economy, recreational opportunities and quality of life for residents and visitors alike depend on it.

Your time and consideration of this critical project is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,



John Raymond
President, Northern Timber Cruisers